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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/05/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: FM SHARPLY CRITICAL OF PM OFFICE UNSCR ROLE;
THINKS NIE WILL EMBOLDEN TEHRAN

REF: STATE 162558

Classified By: Classified by S/I David Satterfield for Reasons 1.4(d/b)

¶1. (S) SUMMARY. In a December 4 meeting with S/I Satterfield, Foreign Minister Zebari described the "heated" debate UNSCR renewal triggered in both the Iraqi Council of Representatives and the Council of Ministers. Both on the record and in private, Zebari blamed the small cadre of "Dawa Party Ideologues" in the Prime Minister's office for most of the difficulties in the SPD and UNSCR processes. Zebari warned that the December 3 NIE would "embolden" Iran and worried that Tehran's continued equivocation over a date for tri-lateral talks was another indication of increased assertiveness. Zebari provided some indication the Neighbors "support mechanism" is moving forward but did not have a time-table for upcoming Neighbors events. END SUMMARY.

UNSCR--HEATED COR, PCNS MEETINGS

¶2. (S) Foreign Minister Zebari opened by describing for S/I Satterfield the "heated" sessions UNSCR renewal had triggered in both the Council of Representatives and the Political Council on National Security (PCNS.) Zebari said some representatives were skeptical this would be the final Chapter VII resolution, prompting him to counter that POTUS and the PM had already signed a Declaration of Principles to that effect. Referring to UNSCR renewal as an "executive decision," Zebari said the CoR would not debate the matter before the GOI submitted it to the Security Council. S/I Satterfield stressed the USG hoped to conclude UNSCR-related talks with the GOI within 24 hours (COB, December 5) and present the matter to the Security Council before December 10.

¶3. (S) Zebari volunteered that the "entire cabinet" approved the GOI's first version of the UNSCR renewal letter, but that at a subsequent PCNS meeting, the Prime Minister's office tabled an amended letter that sparked intense debate. Zebari said he and UIA/ISCI Vice President Adel Abdel Mehdi "fought hard" against the proposed changes, arguing the UNSCR renewal was taking Iraq in "a new direction"; that the cabinet would not accept the amendments; and that in the end, as with the August Leadership Declaration, the Prime Minister's office would "return to the original version." Zebari noted that President Talabani appeared receptive to the PMO's arguments that in 2007 the Coalition had gone beyond the terms of the resolution and that subsequent version should contain changes to the operative language.

¶4. (S) S/I Satterfield mentioned that following the PCNS he had had a "difficult" meeting with senior PM advisors Sami al Askeri and Saddiq Rikabi (Satterfield made a point of noting that Mowaffuq Rubaie had been absent) about the PMO's version of the letter. Heremarked that while some parts of

the letter were unobjectionable, much was poorly drafted and would embarrass the GOI if presented in an international forum. Other clauses were incompatible with the authorities contained in the UNSCR itself and could not be accepted by the US. Zebari suggested that because the USG so often dealt directly with the PMO on foreign affairs issues, we were partly to blame for the problem. S/I Satterfield commented that the USG "had taken a cautionary lesson" from the SPD and the UNSCR proceedings.

IRAN--NIE DEMARCHE--ESTIMATE WILL EMBOLDEN IRAN

15. (S) S/I Satterfield delivered reftel demarche and talking points and underscored that the new assessment did not change the fact that Iran was, is and will remain a dangerous country. S/I Satterfield stressed that POTUS was particularly concerned about the NIE's impact in Iraq and pressed Zebari for likely fallout. Without hesitating, Zebari responded the report would "embolden" Iran (and Syria.) He cited increased militia activity (after a period of relative calm,) obstructionist behavior by some CoR members, and an up-tick in the amount of shelling British forces receive in Basrah as signs of increased Iranian meddling in Iraq. Zebari worried that Tehran's fear of a long-term strategic partnership between Iraq and the US, its perception of Annapolis as a failure, and the Gulf Cooperation Council's invitation to President Ahmedinejad to address its December 3 Doha meeting were other factors that would encourage Iranian "misbehavior."

IRAN--TRI-LATERAL MEETINGS--STILL NO DATE

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16. (S) Zebari said Iranian Ambassador Qummi told him during a discussion the previous day that while Iran agreed to the agenda and level for the next round of tri-lats, they had not yet set a date for the meeting. Zebari hoped to have more information within 24/48 hours, but argued that Tehran's equivocation on the issue was another (unwelcome) sign of increased assertiveness.

NEIGHBORS ISSUES--SUPPORT MECHANISM HAS PRIORITY, NO DATES FOR WORKING GROUPS

17. (S) Zebari confirmed that the MFA had met with UNAMI twice about the support mechanism, but did not mention any forward movement on office space, staffing or other logistics. Without being specific, Zebari said Deputy Foreign Minister Libeed Abbawi, the GOI POC for the initiative, was "following up" the UNAMI meetings. Zebari added that the GOI would focus on the next round of working group meetings after establishing the support mechanism, which Zebari described as the GOI's "top priority." (NOTE: We have told Zebari several times that we want a full round of Neighbors events before the end of the first week in March. END NOTE)

ONE-ON-ONE SESSION--FM-S/I

18. (S) In a private one-on-one side-bar, Zebari sharply criticized the Prime Minister's office and the clique of "Dawa Party ideologues" whom he blames for the difficulties encountered during the SPD and UNSCR processes. BUTENIS